

and Gambia, and the nine-page introduction provides short, but useful, discussions on the region's geography, climate, vegetation, and major habitats. The habitat descriptions include marine, coastal, estuarine, mangrove, freshwater riverbank, and other wetland habitats, as well as farmlands and villages, hotel gardens, Guinea savanna, Sudan savanna, and dry Sahel of northern Senegal. The habitat section is followed by a short section on the Sejegambian avifauna, which boasts over 660 species, about a third of which are migrants from the Palearctic region. Additionally, there are descriptions and locator maps of the protected areas in Gambia and Senegal, a short discussion that will aid the reader in using this book, and illustrations of avian plumage topography that should be useful in understanding the keys and descriptions throughout the text.

High-quality plates are an important feature in any field guide, and the present volume meets that criterion nicely. The 48 plates, however, provide rather small images, which reduces the size of key characteristics used for identification. The plates also lack arrows pointing out key identification characteristics. Nonetheless, they are of excellent quality and will prove highly useful for anyone visiting Gambia and Senegal or surrounding areas.

Each species account includes the species' common and scientific names, relevant plate numbers, and a comprehensive section on identification. Comments on similar or confusing species are followed by remarks on flight characteristics, habits, voice, status and distribution, and reproduction, as well as when migrant species typically appear. Occasional vignettes illustrate such things as the differences in the nests of weaver birds, characteristic patterns of gull flights, and aerial song-flight displays among *Cisticola* species. Most field guides provide range maps for each species, but this guide provides none. This omission may be due to the fact that nearly one-third of the species are migratory, but range maps would have been very useful for resident species. Following the species accounts, this guide provides a listing of three conservation organizations and their membership information, a bibliography of cited references, and an index of English and scientific names that will allow those familiar with the

region's avifauna to easily locate species accounts and plates.

Overall, the authors certainly should be commended for producing such a compact and badly needed field guide for Gambia and Senegal. I found it reasonably priced and a welcome resource for those planning to visit the area and enjoy its diversity and abundance of resident and migratory species.—HARLAN D. WALLEY, Department of Biology, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb; e-mail: hdw@niu.edu

BIRDS OF TROPICAL AMERICA: A WATCHER'S INTRODUCTION TO BEHAVIOR, BREEDING, AND DIVERSITY. By Steven Hilty. University of Texas Press, Austin. 2005: 312 pp., 12 black-and-white illustrations. ISBN: 0-292-70673-1. \$19.95 (paper).—This title was originally published by Chapters Publishing of Shelburne, Vermont, as part of their *The Curious Naturalist* series, and then it was reprinted in 2005 by the University of Texas Press with an updated suggested reading list and epilogue. After being out of print for several years, this particularly well-written book is finally back in print and readily available to interested readers.

Steven Hilty discusses issues of tropical ornithology in a readable and engaging manner. He has organized the book in a series of twenty stand-alone essays, each of which focuses on a theme related to Neotropical birds. The essays are as varied as tropical habitats and the birds they support. Not only do they educate and entertain the reader, they provide some insight as to why tropical habitats and birds are so different from those of northern latitudes. The text is enhanced by black-and-white illustrations of tropical birds in their habitats.

Initial chapters cover avian community structure and diversity of Neotropical rain forests, biogeography of the Amazon River basin, and how the most recent Ice Age affected bird distribution, migration, and mixed-species flocks. Subsequent essays cover ant swarms and the bird species that follow them; avian coloration; fruit, frugivory, and avian dispersal of seeds; displays performed by manakins and cotingas; hummingbird forag-

ing strategies; hummingbirds, flycatchers, vultures, and caciques that inhabit high altitudes; vocal production and sound characteristics; ecology of island specialists in the Amazon River basin; and seasonality in the tropics. I particularly enjoyed Hilty's explanations of commonly observed behaviors, including the song flight of the Blue-black Grassquit (*Volatinia jacarina*).

This book is recommended for all those interested in tropical birds and birding. It would make an interesting collection of readings for an ornithology class or a good read for your next tropical birding trip.—MARY GUSTAFSON, Rio Grande Joint Venture, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Mission, Texas; e-mail: mary.gustafson@tpwd.state.tx.us